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RAIL TRANSPORTATION IN THE PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACIES

Transportno Delo, No 6
Sofia, Jun 55

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The consolidation and development of economic ties between the People's Democracies and the growth of the freight shipments between them annually impose great transportation requirements.

Railroad transportation is the basic type of transportation in the countries of the socialist camp which assures normal production and turnover of industrial and agricultural products, and, therefore, the uninterrupted functioning of the world democratic market.

The major part of freight turnover and the performance of various kinds of transport in almost every country in the socialist camp falls on the railroad transportation system. Thus, in Czechoslovakia, railroad transport accounts for about 94 percent of the volume of freight shipments handled by all types of transport; in Rumania, 87 percent; in Hungary and the (German Democratic Republic), 84 percent each; in Bulgaria 74 percent; and in Poland, 77 percent. Similarly, the railroad transportation system of the People's Republic of China carries the major part of the freight shipments.

The European countries, particularly the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, have a comparatively dense railroad transportation network in proportion to their territory and population. The length of rail lines in kilometers per 100 kilometers of territory in the GDR is 13.6; in Czechoslovakia, 10.5; in Hungary, 8.9; in Poland, 7.6; in Rumania, 4.6; and in Bulgaria, 3.3. The length of rail lines in kilometers per 100,000 inhabitants in the GDR is 7.2; in Czechoslovakia, 10.7; in Hungary, 9.6; in Poland, 9.2; in Rumania, 6.5; and in Bulgaria, 9.2. In the postwar years, these countries have almost completely restored the prewar railroad network, and have also constructed a series of new railroad lines.

Thus, in 1952 in Bulgaria, traffic was dispatched over the new Sub-Balkan Railroad System (Podbalkanska liniya), connecting the western part of the country with the Black Sea ports. The Sub-Balkan line has a 5,801-meter long tunnel, which is the longest tunnel in the Balkan Mountains.

In Czechoslovakia, a new line running from Brno to Havlikuv Brod was opened in 1953, as well as completion of the important main line connecting Czechoslovakia with the Soviet Union.

In Poland, several hundred kilometers of new railroad lines were constructed, and, in addition, measures were introduced for electrification of railroads. In comparison with 1938, electrification of the Polish railroad system increased 170 percent [no date given, presumably 1953]. Electrically operated suburban commuter and regular passenger trains now operate on the Warsaw and the Gdynia-Gdansk lines and on the Warsaw-Lodz line. Electrification of the Warsaw-Stalinogrod-Gliwice line, which will link Warsaw with Silesia, is envisaged in 1955.

In 1954, railroad traffic moved across the Danube River via the [Friendship] Bridge between Bulgaria and Rumania, and via the bridge between Hungary and Czechoslovakia.

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Constructed in the record time of [illegible] and 3 months, the bridge between Bulgaria and Rumania is one of the largest in Europe, and represents the mutual efforts of Bulgarian and Rumanian builders as well as the fraternal aid of the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Construction of these bridges significantly improves Bulgaria's railroad ties with the other countries of the democratic camp, and improves railroad ties between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Construction of these bridges is clear evidence of friendship and cooperation between the countries.

In the 5 years of its existence, the People's Republic of China has restored the prewar railroad network, and has constructed more than 2,700 kilometers of new railroad lines.

Construction of the new railroad lines in China, particularly in the western part of the country, is of immense significance to the rapid development of productive forces and for complete utilization of natural resources in such provinces as Sinkiang, Tsinghai, Kansu, and Shensi. With the operation of the new lines, particularly the Chunking-Ch'eng-tu and T'ien-shui--Lan-chou lines, favorable conditions are created for widespread utilization of the resources of such extraordinarily wealthy Chinese provinces as Szechwan, which previously was isolated from the general Chinese market because of a lack of satisfactory railroad communications.

In the near future, a series of new, important railroad lines will be built in China, including the Pao-chi--Ch'eng-tu line, which is an extension of the Chungking--Ch'eng-tu line, and the Ch'eng-tu--Kunming line, which will link Szechwan Province with the southern provinces.

Construction of the Lan-chou--Urumchi--Alma-Ata railroad line and of the Chi-ning--Erh-lien--Ulan Bator line will create the newest and shortest link between the People's Republic of China and the Mongolian People's Republic. The Chi-ning--Erh-lien--Ulan Bator line, which will shorten the route between Moscow and Peiping by more than 1,000 kilometers, must be opened in 1955. [It was opened on 1 January 1955]. The Lan-chou--Urumchi--Alma-Ata line will traverse Northwest China and will facilitate creation of a huge industrial base which will surpass the industrial potential of the northeastern areas. At the same time, this line will influence the economic development of southeastern Kazakhstan, and will stimulate future growth and consolidation of the railroad lines connecting Central Asia with the central areas of our country [USSR]. The new Lan-chou--Urumchi--Alma-Ata line will be the shortest route linking central and southern China with Central Asia, the Ural region, and the central region of the European part of the USSR.

The cooperation and mutual aid of the countries of the socialist camp with respect to railroad transport is developed along various lines: organization of railroad freight shipments, operation of mobile equipment, railroad construction, and exchanges of experiences concerning the introduction of new techniques and progressive labor methods.

For the purpose of organizing direct railroad freight and passenger service, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and the USSR concluded the International Railway Traffic Agreement in 1951.

In 1953, the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the Mongolian People's Republic became signatories of this agreement. As a result, today this agreement is in effect on the railroad lines of the entire camp of socialism and democracy, with the exception of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

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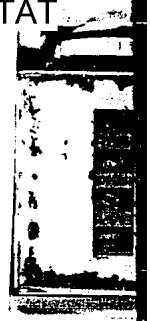

An international organization whose purpose it is to consolidate mutual ties and cooperation between the railroad administrations of the countries of the socialist camp, and to improve the organization of export-import freight shipment, was organized as the basis of this agreement. The agreement calls for the selection of a managing administration from among personnel of the railroad administrations participating in the SMGS (not farther identified) and the SMPS (International Railway Traffic Agreement) to secure fulfillment of these agreements.

The joint managing administration convenes regular conferences once every 2 years, but with a two thirds majority of all participants, can call extraordinary sessions to solve questions arising from interpretation of the agreements as well as modifications and supplements. The decisions of the conferences are confirmed by the central organs of the railroad administrations of the countries participating in the agreements.

The agreement provides procedural methods for concluding, fulfilling, and modifying traffic agreements, and defines the rights and responsibilities of railroad personnel, the procedure for prosecuting complaints, and the procedure for settlement of accounts between railroad administrations. The application of uniform bills of lading and other traffic documents is also provided for.

The agreements are based on the conditions and requirements of the planned economy of the countries of the socialist camp. For example, the SMGS requires railroad administrations to transport all freight which is envisaged in the traffic plan of the dispatching railroad system. The shippers are required to route the freight via the shortest possible route between the shipping and receiving depots; the freight charge in every instance is computed on the shortest distance between the destinations designated in the bill of lading by the dispatching agent. The agreements also provide for a uniform freight tariff rate, which is lower than the internal tariffs in effect in the participating countries, on shipments in transit via the territories of the countries participating in the agreement.

Since the uniform transit tariff creates uniform freight traffic conditions for shippers in the countries participating in the agreement, it also guarantees rational use of transport facilities and the shortest routes for freight traffic. It also facilitates railroad traffic between the European People's Democracies, China, and the USSR, and, in this way, plays an important role in expanding and strengthening the economic ties between the countries of the camp of Socialism and democracy.

The SMPS defines passenger, express, and parcel post traffic regulations; defines the duties and responsibilities of railroad administrations as concerns passenger traffic; and the procedure for settlement of accounts. The agreement also provides for application of a previously agreed upon tariff rate for passenger, express, and parcel post traffic in the territory of the countries participating in the agreement.

In addition, the railroad administrations of the participating countries have agreed on uniform rules governing the use of railroad cars in international freight and passenger traffic.

Since the standard gauge of Russian railroads is wider than that of the Eastern People's Democracies or of the People's Republic of China, the regulations provide for the transfer of cars by the car truck frames or axles of the required gauge at border railroad stations which are especially equipped for this purpose.

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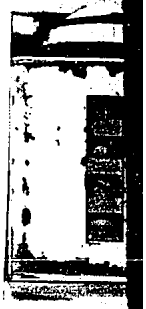

The regulations also stipulate the technical requirements for passenger and freight cars used in international traffic, especially as concerns gauge clearance, allowable weight per axle, and allowable resistance of the couplers, draft gears, and buffer attachments. For example, freight cars must have not more than 16 tons weight per axle, and not less than 65 tons resistance to pressure per coupling gears. Cars having a 50-ton breaking limit per coupling and draft gear may be used through the end of 1955, after which they will be selected for use in separate trains.

After unloading, the cars must be returned to the original dispatching railroad administration. The cars enroute to their point of origin may be loaded "in transit" with cargo destined for a point beyond the limits of the system on which they normally operate.

The regulations also govern railroad-car maintenance and repair. Necessary spare parts are shipped free of charge by the railway administration owning the cars, and the damaged parts (axles, springs, bearings) are returned.

Elimination of variety in the kinds of cars in railroad yards, and uniformity of the most important parts would improve the utility of cars used in international traffic, would shorten maintenance time, and would shorten the time spent in waiting for the arrival of spare parts, as well as the expense of shipping the necessary spare parts.

The regulations provide that the system which accepts cars belonging to the railway system of another country will pay 1.1 rubles for the first 7 days, after which the rate increases so that from the 16th day forward the rate is more than 8 rubles per railroad car per 24-hour period.

This schedule stimulates faster return of cars to the point of origin, accelerates car turnover, and shortens loading and unloading time.

An outstanding example of international cooperation in transportation is the organization of direct traffic over a series of important routes.

In 1953-1954, direct international passenger traffic was inaugurated via Moscow-Bucharest-Sofia, Moscow-Budapest, Moscow-Prague, and Moscow-Warsaw-Berlin.

Direct passenger train service from Moscow to Peiping was inaugurated in January 1954. Similarly, direct service between Moscow and Berlin via -Smolensk, Brest, and Warsaw was inaugurated in February 1955. The entire trip from Moscow to Berlin requires a little more than 48 hours.

On the basis of bilateral traffic agreements, the Bulgarian Railway System makes use of refrigerator and freight cars from the other People's Democracies, particularly during the period of heavy fall shipments of fruits and vegetables. In individual cases, some countries leave tank cars for temporary use for transportation of petroleum from Rumania.

The railroad administrations of the People's Democracies benefit from the valuable experiences of the USSR. During recent years, they have received wide amplification of such new methods as traffic and operational planning (technical plan), traffic routing, economic accounting, and technological processes in the work of railroad stations. The movement of heavy freight trains continues to expand each year. For example, in 1954, the quantity of above-norm freight transported by trains out of Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, was equal to 2,450 trains and represented a saving of 12 train loads of coal.

Similarly, in 1954 in Poland, about 350,000 tons of coal were saved by efficient use of heavy freight trains.

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Railroad car-turnaround time has been increased considerably. Thus, in Bulgaria the railroad car-turnaround time was 1.9 days faster in 1954 than in 1948, in Rumania, 2.2 days; in Poland, 2.0 days; in Czechoslovakia, 0.5 days; in Hungary, 1.3 days; and in the GDR, 1.4 days.

The volume of freight traffic (in tons) in Bulgaria and in Poland in 1954 was 2.3 times greater than in 1948; in Poland, 1.9 times greater; in Czechoslovakia, 1.7 times; in Hungary, 3.1 times; and in the GDR, almost 2.2 times greater. In the People's Republic of China, the freight traffic plan was fulfilled 103.1 percent [in 1954?], or almost double the freight traffic (in tons) in 1950.

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